

WHAT'S IN STORE:

a Swedish Dramedy

by Kate Brennan

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## CHARACTERS

JAYCEE: 35, F, looking for a home and employment, experiencing a life change

MAVIS: 22, F, a very pregnant DUKTIG clerk, snarky and smart

WES: 35-40, M, DUKTIG manager, overly enthusiastic to cope with a broken heart

GERI (Geraldine): 64, F, the DUKTIG night guard, multi-skilled

JEANINE (Broker): 27, F, a real estate broker, Wes' ex, and later, a Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso Rep, restless

*\*All characters are open ethnicity, with a preference for inclusion and diversity.*

## SETTING

At the beginning – a slew of ill-fated, poorly-appointed apartments

For the rest – Duktig, a Swedish furniture store

The time is now.

## NOTE ON THE TEXT

A slash (/) indicates that the point at which the next line begins and overlaps with the line that is being said. (Parentheses) surrounding text marks the thought of the remainder of the line, but that text is not said. When a character's name is listed with no subsequent line, the character is reacting or having a thought.

## SYNOPSIS

Discouraged by her recent futile apartment search and the equally futile state of the world, Jaycee finds solace in the clean lines and pre-fab layouts at DUKTIG, her local Swedish furniture store. So she moves in. When others follow her lead, will she be discovered or start a revolution? A heart-warming and unconventional take on where we live, and the parts of ourselves we donate to make it home.

## **PROLOGUE**

*Modern-day apartment hunting.* BROKER, late 20s, is showing JAYCEE, 35, a series of apartments.

### ***Apartment 1.***

*She looks around. Beat.*

JAYCEE

I was hoping for a window.

BROKER

There's a skylight.

JAYCEE

That's actually just a hole in the ceiling.

### ***Apartment 2.***

BROKER

A window, as requested.

*Jaycee steps to "window" and peers out.*

JAYCEE

I was hoping for a window that didn't just look at the garbage.

### ***Apartment 3.***

JAYCEE

Or another building.

### ***Apartment 4.***

*Jaycee looks out window to "deck" or "rooftop of next building."*

JAYCEE

Is that a, um, chalk outline?

BROKER

That's probably a joke.

***Apartment 7.***

JAYCEE

(It's SO HOT) So there's no air conditioning.

BROKER

Not in your price range.

***Apartment 12.***

JAYCEE

(sniffs) Is that curry?

BROKER

Ooooh, I'm hungry.

***Apartment 15.***

JAYCEE

Are the bars on the windows optional?

BROKER

You'll wanna keep them.

***Apartment 21.***

JAYCEE

This is railroad. I said no railroad.

BROKER

OK.

**Apartment 27.**

JAYCEE

The number is 5C but we just walked up seven stories.

BROKER

(is still climbing steps, from offstage) I'm coming. I'm almost there!

JAYCEE

I don't think so.

**Apartment 32.**

*Jaycee looks around. Is pleased at first...*

JAYCEE

OK. OK.– Wait. Where's the bathroom?

BROKER

Oh. It's in the hallway. You share it with the other residents on the floor.

JAYCEE

(without missing a beat, walking out immediately)

Oh no. Nononononononononononono. Hell no.

*Jaycee exits.*

*Broker stands there holding up keys.*

*Jaycee reenters head down.*

*Defeated, Jaycee takes keys.*

## SCENE 1

*The DUKTIG Showroom.*

*It is a climate-controlled utopia. Shopping muzak plays. It feels very different from the previous mayhem.*

<p style="text-align: center;">LOUDSPEAKER</p> <p>God morgon. God morgon shoppare, and Welcome to Duktig where everyone is family.</p> <p>Here at Duktig we believe in Minimalism, Order and Beauty, Clean Lines, Pleasing Aesthetics and Superior Function.</p> <p>Simply follow the yellow brick road past our Surströmmingspremier kitchens, our Angestdämpande bedrooms and Fingertoppskänsla work stations.</p> <p>Meander through our Sagolikt children's rooms, pick up a Knullrufs pillow to make yourself more comfortable or grab an Orka bar from checkout.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">JAYCEE</p> <p>Ooooh.</p> <p><i>Jaycee examines the Kulturbärare Bookcase.</i></p> <p>(reading tag) The Kul-tur-bä-rare Bookcase: Books nestle here when you are gone/ Learn something new or pass it on.</p> <p>Kinda rhymes. Cute.</p> <p>(reading) In Faded Eggshell, Enchanted Ochre and Fig.</p> <p><i>Jaycee checks out the Lagom Bar Cart and reads.</i></p> <p>(reading tag) The Langom Bar Cart: Have a little treat and such/ Just careful not to drink too much!</p> <p>In Midnight rose, Appalachian Taupe and Effervescent Night.</p>
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LOUDSPEAKER (cont)	JAYCEE (cont)
<p data-bbox="228 195 808 317">Duktig creates beautiful functional spaces so you can focus on what's really important: the people you love.</p> <p data-bbox="228 365 821 487">Help is only a few steps away if you need it! Look for our Experience Enhancers in sky blue if you need assistance.</p> <p data-bbox="228 957 808 1079">And remember: "You no longer need to roam / cause Duktig makes a house a home!"</p>	<p data-bbox="849 365 1300 445"><i>Jaycee tests the firmness of the Kärleksförklaring Sofabed.</i></p> <p data-bbox="849 575 1328 613">The Kär-leks-förk-la-ring Sofabed</p> <p data-bbox="849 659 1409 781">A better night's slumber than you ever believed/ Sleep on the mattress where more babies are conceived.</p> <p data-bbox="849 827 1398 907">OK. (Gets off bed quickly.) Maybe not this one.</p>

*Jaycee grabs her items and heads to checkout. Immediately into:*

## **SCENE 2**

*A checkout counter at DUKTIG. Mavis, 22, under-challenged and disillusioned, stands behind checkout counter wearing store apron. She is eight and a half months pregnant. She scans Jaycee's items as she speaks with her. Mavis is drinking from a 64 oz soda container. It's at the bottom and it makes a slurping sound.*

*Jaycee approaches checkout with cumbersome items in tow.*

JAYCEE

Wow, it must be so great to work here!

*MAVIS holds up a finger without looking at her like "hold up."*

MAVIS

(mumbling): We hope you enjoyed shopping at Duktig because Duktig makes a house a home.

JAYCEE

Uh.

MAVIS

You find everything you were looking for?

JAYCEE

Actually, no.

MAVIS

Well, you can't always get what you want.

JAYCEE

What?

MAVIS



You can't. always get. what you want.

JAYCEE

Oh.

MAVIS

(confidentially): But if you try sometimes -

JAYCEE

(leaning in): Yeah?

MAVIS

You just might find -

JAYCEE

...

MAVIS

(singing): You get what you need.

JAYCEE

Oh, yeah. I get it.

MAVIS

(shouts across aisle behind her): Tamir, you owe me \$5.

*Mavis scans an item.*

Oh, the Tidoptimist timepiece. It's perpetually five minutes fast because the time optimist always runs behind.

JAYCEE

Sorry?

MAVIS

The Snygging hand mirror! It always makes you look a little better than you actually do to improve your self-confidence.

JAYCEE

Really.

MAVIS

Oh, I could use this right now.

Not that I could afford it on what they pay me, ya know. (to "the man") Not that I could afford it with the meager rations from the monolith! (continues to swipe things)

(Now, referring to baby) And I've pretty much gotta pop this out, strap it on my back and breastfeed while beeping myself into obscurity because I have APPARENTLY not put in enough Quality Customer Time to earn a few months to recover from building a new human being entirely from scratch and adding it to the world like an earth-trodding deity.

JAYCEE

You don't (get parental leave)? –

MAVIS

Cause let me tell you: once you leave that glowing fluorescent showroom and this climate controlled utopia of dreams, guess what's outside of those frosted automatic sliding frosted glass doors?

JAYCEE

Uhhh.

MAVIS

*The World.* The Big Bad Relentless Unforgiving Filthy Expensive Dangerous Polarized Misogynistic Natural Disaster-Ridden Ashtray Dumpster Fire that we've lit in the womb of Mother Earth.

JAYCEE

Should I get you (someone)

MAVIS

When I used to ask what caused the rain, my father said that fossil fuels made God cry.

Ooh! *Barnasinne Book ends!*

JAYCEE

(suddenly not wanting to return to the terribly world)

You know what?

I don't think I'm gonna leave

just

yet.

MAVIS

But -

JAYCEE

I think I'll take...um. These. Back. Yeah. (*She grabs the Barnasinne Book ends.*)

MAVIS

What about the rest???

JAYCEE

I'm gonna. Leave it. There...and-

MAVIS

I'm gonna have to restock all this shit?

JAYCEE

*(indicates behind her):* I - I'm just gonna - (go this way)

*Jaycee is absorbed into the store.*

MAVIS

*(yelling after her, indicating opposite direction):* The exit's this way. If you go that way - *(gives up, under her breath)* you'll have to go through the whole damn store again.

*She looks at all the junk on the belt. She experiences acid reflux, maybe burps. She has morning sickness that never goes away, except when she is distracted.*

*(partially to herself)* Well at least stick to the yellow path or you'll never find your way out again.

OVERHEAD SPEAKER

Mavis to customer service. Mavis to customer service please.

MAVIS

Not today.

*Mavis is exhausted.*

*(To the monolith)* Not today, Satan.

*She takes off her apron and throws it down.*

**NOT TODAY!**

*Gives the finger as she walks out.*

### SCENE 3

*The next morning. The DUKTIG showroom. There are multiple bedroom and living room displays adjacent to each other, each with its own style. The bookshelves are stacked with Swedish hardback novels. Jaycee is asleep in her clothes in one of the beds.*

*WES, 32, an eager-to-please floor manager committed to self-improvement, goes to check a tag nearby and notices her. He looks around to see if anyone can confirm that there is in fact a woman sleeping in the bed.*

WES

(tentatively): Uh. Excuse me.

*Nothing.*

Hah. Uh.

*What should he do?*

Uh, Miss? (*he tries to rouse her*) Miss?

(*he tries another tactic*) Excuse me?

*Nothing.*

*Oh my god, is she dead?*

MISS? Hello!?

*He jostles the bed, which is on wheels and it goes farther than he had intended. He tries to recover as Jaycee pops up.*

WES (cont.)

(recovering) Hi. Um, good morning, god morgon! Uh, yes. Yes. Can I... help you?

JAYCEE

(adjusting): No.

WES

Were, you, ah, sleeping here?

JAYCEE

Was I...?

WES

Sleeping here? In the store?

JAYCEE

In the...

WES

Like, overnight?

JAYCEE

(grabs her glasses from the side table) I - I - I - work here.

WES

You—

JAYCEE

Work here.

WES

Oh.

JAYCEE

Yeah.

WES

No one mentioned I was getting someone new.

JAYCEE

Yes, I'm new. Because I work here.

WES

Well, I'm Wes. I'm floor manager in the bed/living room section. I'm pretty new here too. I used to work over in kids' bedrooms. What a nightmare.

JAYCEE

Bahdum ching.

WES

What?

JAYCEE

(dismissing the bad pun joke) No.

WES

Oh.

JAYCEE

Nothing.

WES

So, I'm not sure what department you came from, but here we don't try out the beds. Like, we don't sleep in the beds.

JAYCEE

Oh.

WES

Maybe where you used to work they -

JAYCEE

Quality testing.

WES

Yes?

JAYCEE

For the furniture. And to show the shoppers.

WES

Show them...?

JAYCEE

How each room really functions.

WES

Huh. What store did you say you transferred from?

JAYCEE

Where I-

WES

-worked before?



JAYCEE

Topeka.

WES

Topeka?

JAYCEE

Kentucky.

WES

Oh, I thought that was in Kansas.

JAYCEE

Most people do.

WES

Ok, Ms. - I don't even know your name.

JAYCEE

Dorothy.

WES

Dorothy?

JAYCEE

That was a joke. Kansas, *The Wizard of* – Forget it.

WES

Oh?

JAYCEE

Jaycee. My name is Jaycee.

WES

Ok, Miss Jaycee Dorothy from Topeka Kentucky. We will have to get you orientAated. But first, uh, why don't you make the bed.

*Jaycee considers.*

JAYCEE

Make the -

WES

-bed.

JAYCEE

In Topeka the customers liked them to look a little lived in.

WES

Interesting strategy there, Topeka. Maybe we should try that out. I mean, not today. Let's make it today. (he starts making the bed really well) "When you're new act new." "Cleanliness and godliness" and all that. There's something deeply unsettling about an unmade bed, don't you think?

JAYCEE

Oh, it doesn't really - (bother me)

WES

Make your bed, make your day.

JAYCEE

I've never -

WES

Then Mama said, be on your way!

JAYCEE

- heard that before.

WES

Make your bed to clear your head.

JAYCEE

That's - -

WES

An unmade bed/ You're better dead.

JAYCEE

-morbid

and severe. Is that a rhyme for children?

WES

(an expert bedmaker, he finishes and it looks amazing) Now that's better, don't you think?

JAYCEE

Wow. That's - I like what you did with the pillows.

WES

(He starts to go) Glad to have you on board -

JAYCEE

The bathrooms don't have running water. *(She indicates the model bathrooms.)*

WES

No.

JAYCEE

The customers. In Topeka. Purchased more bathroom items than any other store. Because we had running water.

WES

Already bringing in top notch ideas. I like it. I mean, not too much too soon. But over time. I'm trying to be more open to change. My ex said I was intransigent. Do you know what intransigent means?

JAYCEE

Immovable.

WES

Obdurate.

JAYCEE

Uncompromising.

WES

Immutable.

JAYCEE

Unyielding.

WES

Inexorable.

JAYCEE

That's.

WES

I could go on. I recite "intransigent" synonyms at night as I fall asleep as a reminder that I have to evolve if ever I want to be in a mature, loving, reciprocal relationship.

JAYCEE

That's -

JAYCEE

WES

A little harsh.

Penance.

WES

You are going to fit in great here, Jaycee. (*noticing side table*) Is this your contact solution?

JAYCEE

That may be mine. Yes.

WES

Oh, I see what you did there. Exactly like home. A little disorganized, but nothing I can't handle.

JAYCEE

There's no place like home.

WES

I'm gonna keep my eye on you! Because you are going places! And also because you are a little messier than we are used to and that makes me marginally uncomfortable. But mostly because I have a good feeling about you and I am open to becoming a better person. I will see you at the team meeting at 10.

*He exits.*

*Jaycee grabs her contact solution, sees a customer going by.*

JAYCEE

Hi, I work here.

*Lights.*

#### **SCENE 4**

*Wes addresses the team at a meeting.*

WES

Now, as you all know, we are facing cutbacks. There's talk of merging with other branches, a possible acquisition by a larger company. And if I've learned anything from my meditation app, it's that we cannot control the world, but we can control how we react to it.

So: how can we here at DUKTIG stay the family that we have become? We need to sell more bedroom and living room furniture than any other store - and then corporate headquarters will move right on and make cuts to some other store. We may have to try new things - be flexible, pliable, yielding. Do you know what those are *antonyms* for?

It's not important.

We have a couple newbies in our midst. Sandra, from linens, will be joining us for the rest of the week. Hi Sandra. And Jaycee, from our Topeka store was just reassigned here. Welcome, Jaycee. (*Trying to make a joke:*) Or should we call you Dorothy?

*No one laughs.*

No. I'm just kidding.

*Awkward beat.*

It's because of *The Wizar-*

Moving on.

Some more business to attend to... (*he checks list*) It is Jeff's birthday today! Happy birthday, Jeff. Jeff has brought in cake for all of us to celebrate, so there will be cake in the break room today. Monday just got a whole lot better, am I right?

What else? (*consults list*) Uhhhh. Oh, yes. Apparently someone replaced the regular hardcover books in one of the living room layouts with multiple copies of *Everybody Poops*. Well played. But corporate doesn't like us to have American titles on our shelves, as you know, in the event the book selections influence the buying choices. Needless to say, *Everybody Poops*, while universal in nature, ultimately still falls under the purview of an English title, and so we've gathered them in the break room, and when you grab a slice of birthday cake, feel free to take a book home with you for the kids. Or yourself. Makes a great gift for all ages.

OK. (*Checks list*) Done. (*Checks list.*) Marty, could I see you briefly after we are done here. And John, I'd love it if you'd allow Jaycee to tag along with you since she is new to our branch.

Thanks everyone. Have a great day. And remember: "You no longer need to roam –

(*leads them into response*)

ALL

(*maybe a VO or backstage actors, halfheartedly*) " - because DUKTIG makes a house a home."

## **SCENE 5**

*Nighttime at the store. Dimly lit. It is desolate. Jaycee enters R with a towel on her head in a bathrobe or towel with a shower caddy while brushing her teeth. Mavis enters L with a roller suitcase or duffle. They freeze; they stare at each other. Muzak plays.*

MAVIS

What's with the music?

JAYCEE

There aren't many options.

MAVIS

You're in a bathrobe.

JAYCEE

You've got baggage.

MAVIS

Don't we all.

JAYCEE

I meant that literally.

MAVIS

I meant that metaphorically.

*Jaycee brushes, unfazed.*

Are you – wait–

*Mavis realizes:*

You're the one who left all that stuff for me to restock.



JAYCEE

I didn't need it.

MAVIS

*(Beat as she looks around.)* No one needs it.

*Moment.*

I didn't expect anyone to be here.

JAYCEE

Well, you can't always get what you want.

MAVIS

Funny.

Do you mind if I take *(looks around)* this room?

*Mavis goes into room. Jaycee continues to brush her teeth.*

JAYCEE

OK.

*Mavis makes a disconcerting sound from off. Mavis returns holding a small dog.*

MAVIS

Omigod I thought this was a rat.

JAYCEE

So you picked it up?

MAVIS

Is it yours?

JAYCEE

Not really.

MAVIS

*(re: brushing teeth):* You really take that seriously, huh. *(looking at dog undercarriage)*  
Let's see, "are you a good witch or a bad witch?"

JAYCEE

*(re: brushing teeth)* Two full minutes. *(She spits in a sink.)*

MAVIS

Those don't have running water.

JAYCEE

I'm aware.

MAVIS

So this guy (girl) isn't yours?

JAYCEE

Do we ever really own anything?

MAVIS

That's existential.

JAYCEE

Everything is rented. On loan. All of it. On loan.

*Dog sounds in the background.*

MAVIS

Um, are there more. Uh, dogs?

JAYCEE

This is a judgement free zone.

MAVIS

I wasn't –

JAYCEE

Do you want some popcorn?

MAVIS

OK. I'll just.... (put him back)

*She starts to exit but then Jaycee reads something from one of the Swedish books and she stops.*

JAYCEE

Ingen ko på isen.

MAVIS

What does that mean?

JAYCEE

There's no cow on the ice.

MAVIS

OKayyyy...

JAYCEE

*(looks up at her): I've never had a roommate. (noticing Mavis' belly) Roommates.*

*Jaycee tosses Mavis the popcorn bag and exits to finish in bathroom.*

Two minutes, twenty-two seconds. Any more than that and it burns.

*Dogs barking.*

MAVIS

Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore.

*Dogs crescendo.*

## **SCENE 6**

*Two nights later. Nighttime in the store. Mavis and Jaycee are playing "spit," a fast paced game of cards. Throughout the game, Jaycee gets agitated while Mavis is smooth.*

JAYCEE

Shit.

MAVIS

Boom.

JAYCEE

Shit. Shit. Shit.

MAVIS

So what's with the dogs?

JAYCEE

Don't distract me.

MAVIS

What's with the dogs, Jaycee?

JAYCEE

Shut up. Oooh oooh.

MAVIS

And out!

*Mavis smacks her last card down on the table.*

JAYCEE

Shit.

*Jaycee slinks back on herself, releasing the tension of the game.*

JAYCEE

God, this game stresses me out.

*Mavis shuffles cards really well.*

MAVIS

Just one more of my useless talents.

JAYCEE

They were turned in.

MAVIS

Huh?

JAYCEE

The dogs. No one wanted them. Their owners turned them in to high-kill shelters where they were going to be put down within 24 hours.

MAVIS

Sheesh.

JAYCEE

So I go to the shelters and get them.

MAVIS

They let you take - what - seven dogs at a time?

JAYCEE

I go at different times, wear different things, use different names.

MAVIS

Jaycee, you minx, you.

JAYCEE

Why were you fired?

MAVIS

Who said I was fired?

JAYCEE

I did. Just now.

MAVIS

I wasn't fired.

JAYCEE

But you were gonna be.

MAVIS

I was totally gonna be fired.

JAYCEE

What'd you do?

MAVIS

I don't have to tell you.

JAYCEE

No, you don't.

*Mavis shuffles cards. She is an expert shuffler. After a beat.*

MAVIS

It may be hard to believe but I am not the best employee. I apparently have an "attitude problem" and a 'lateness problem" and a "taking too many breaks problem." Plus, I'm gonna need a teeny weensy break to birth a miracle into this apocalyptic shitshow of an abandoned wasteland, you know?

And. Well. OK.

I needed more money than this place pays. So, I'd buy two things at once. Or I'd buy one of them and take two, and I'd make a big deal to the other cashier to check me out and about the product - the mirror or the glasses or whatever - and then I'd come and return it without the receipt cause they just sold it to me, right? Then I'd take the other one and return it to another location *with* the receipt.

JAYCEE

Wow. You're a con.

MAVIS

So are you.

JAYCEE

I'm rescuing puppies.

MAVIS

Well, I am with child.

JAYCEE

Point taken.

*Moment.*

Do you wanna (talk about that?)

MAVIS

*(interrupts to change the subject)* Rematch?

JAYCEE

OK.

*Mavis starts to deal.*

*Geraldine (GERI), a nearly-retired night guard enters and shines her flashlight directly on them.*

GERI

Hello, ladies. A little late to be playing cards in the store, don't you think?

*Geraldine holds a stun gun at them which is really an electric razor. They both freeze not knowing what to say.*



JAYCEE

(throwing her hands up) Is that a /stun gun?

MAVIS

Is that an electric razor?

GERI

What's going on here?

JAYCEE

Could you put that down? We're clearly not violent. (re: "stun gun")

MAVIS

Speak for yourself.

GERI

Does one of you want to explain why you are at the store in the middle of the night playing cards in your pajamas?

*Beat. Then concurrently:*

MAVIS

It's a card club.

JAYCEE

We have a book club.

*Correcting.*

A book club.

Card club.

*Mavis looks at Jaycee like "what?"*

GERI

A card book club.

JAYCEE

Yeah, we read books and play cards. On alternate nights. Tonight as you can see is card night.

GERI

I see. And management knows you're here?

JAYCEE

It's part of the company-sponsored programming initiative.

GERI

Oh, is it? Then where is everyone else.

JAYCEE

They went home.

MAVIS

Sore losers.

GERI

I see.

*She assesses them.*

MAVIS

Do you want to play a hand?

*Geraldine considers.*

GERI

One hand.

JAYCEE

Really?

*Mavis glares at Jaycee like "chill out" and continues to deal. Geraldine puts "stun gun" down on table.*

MAVIS

(to Jaycee) I told you it was a razor.

GERI

I found it in personal care. What book is the book club reading.

JAYCEE

This week, the book club is reading... *Pride & Prejudice*.

MAVIS

*And Zombies.*

JAYCEE

What?

MAVIS

I told you it wasn't just *Pride & Prejudice*. *(smiles)*

GERI

*Pride and Prejudice - and Zombies*. I remember that one. Popular when I was running my independent bookstore. Is there a room for another book club member?

MAVIS

JAYCEE

Of course.

Not really.

MAVIS

Of course there is. I'm Mavis; that's Jaycee.

GERI

OK then. I'm Geri.

*Mavis has dealt by now.*

MAVIS

Do you know this game?

GERI

I know all the games. Had a little stint at the "casinas."

JAYCEE

Gambling?

MAVIS

Now we're talking. Ready? Go.

*They start frantically playing cards.*

*Blackout.*

## **SCENE 7**

*Jaycee is sitting in a living room switching between reading from a Swedish book and using a Swedish to English dictionary.*

WES

*(to a customer off):* Please let me know if I can help you with anything else. Ah, Jaycee. Making use of the Sambovikt sofa I see.

JAYCEE

*(reading from book)* Lämna mig ifred!

WES

I'm sorry, I don't (understand Swedish)

JAYCEE

"Leave me alone."

WES

Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to-

JAYCEE

No. It means "leave me alone."

WES

Oh. I've always meant to learn.

JAYCEE

No time like the present. *(She pats the seat next to her.)*

WES

Ah –I shouldn't. I've got to.

JAYCEE

Next thing you know the only "got to" is die.

WES

Is that in there? *(the book)* Who said that?

JAYCEE

I did. Just now.

WES

That's morbid, Topeka. (*He looks in book*). "Den här herrn betalar för allting." What does that mean.

JAYCEE

(*loud enough for the customers going by to hear*): "The gentleman will pay for everything."

WES

(*to customers*): Anyone can pay for anything really.

JAYCEE

That's what it means. "The gentleman will pay for everything."

WES

Oh. (*He turns to her, more serious*) Jaycee. May I call you Jaycee?

JAYCEE

You just did.

WES

Yes, well, Jaycee. I've been meaning to talk to you about your, um -

JAYCEE

- methods?

WES

Methods. Well, uh, work ethic?

JAYCEE

ToMAYto, toMAHto.

WES

Huh. Yes, well. Your, uh, methods are -

JAYCEE

WES

brilliant?

unconventional.

WES

Unconventional. But. They seems to be working.

JAYCEE

*(surprised)*: They do?

WES

We are selling more than we ever have? Like, we are selling things that aren't seasonal. I don't understand it. But whatever you are doing. Things have changed since you came here.

JAYCEE

I - really?

WES

Teach me your ways. I want to know everything. (takes out paper and pen) I'm ready whenever you are. (He is poised to take notes.)

JAYCEE

Uh.

WES

Too much? I don't have to take notes. I'll listen intently instead. Or - in a relaxed manner. I'm working on receiving more.

JAYCEE

I. Well. Honestly? I don't...do... anything.

WES

You -

JAYCEE

I mean, I sit here, when the customers come, we talk.

WES

You talk? OK. What do you talk about?

JAYCEE

I - it's hard to- , I mean, I listen to whatever they want to say. Sometimes, oh! Sometimes I teach them a Swedish phrase from my book.

WES

(writing down) A Swedish phrase... (catching himself and putting pen away; he's supposed to be listening in a relaxed manner) Oh right. OK. And...?

JAYCEE

And....? I - uhhh, oh! Throw blankets.

WES

Blankets?

JAYCEE



People like to be cozy. So I sort of (mimes tossing blankets about)

WES

(reaches for pen) Thro- (catches himself) Oh. Hmmhmm. I guess, I - I still - I'm not internalizing what it is you are doing. Is there - perhaps - something you are not telling me? Really think about it.

Deep down.

What's your secret?

JAYCEE

*(leaning in, unsure if she should say it)* What if I told you

WES

Yes?

JAYCEE

That I don't actually work here.

*A moment.*

That I was fed up with the world and this place seemed like a harbor in the storm: Order. Cleanliness. Pretty fixtures. Various layout options. That I didn't have to decide on.

WES

JAYCEE

WES

*(not sure whether to laugh):* You don't. Oh. *(laughs nervously)* It's not *like* work. Not if you love it.

JAYCEE

I don't work here.

WES

Right.

JAYCEE

I've never worked here.

WES

*(thinking he gets it):* Riiight. I don't work here, either. *(getting an idea)* I think we need a team meeting. *(He is very excited.)* A team meeting, Topeka. *(He goes to hug her or something equally mortifying.)*

JAYCEE

WES

*(mortified):* Oh. I'm - that was -

JAYCEE

Min sväware är full med ålar.

WES

Yes. Min sväware är full med ålar. *(botches phrase as he backs away awkwardly)* I'll, um. *(turns abruptly and leaves).*

*Mavis pops up from a nearby bed.*

MAVIS

What does that mean?

JAYCEE

My hovercraft is full of eels.

*Mavis reacts.*

*Lights.*

## **SCENE 8**

*Nighttime. Mavis and Jaycee reading the last pages of *Pride & Prejudice* and *Zombies*. Random dog noises sporadically in the back. Mavis finishes first.*

MAVIS

I've been meaning to ask you.

*Jaycee holds up a finger to say "let me finish the paragraph."*

MAVIS

*(waits, then):* I never hear them during the day.

JAYCEE

Who?

MAVIS

The dogs.

JAYCEE

You're not here during the day.

MAVIS

Weh—No, I know.

JAYCEE

How did you finish so fast? *(re: book)*

MAVIS

(shrugs): But, like, how do you keep them quiet?

JAYCEE

Valium.

MAVIS

What?

JAYCEE

Valium. It knocks them out for the day. Then they can be awake at night. They'll probably get used to the sleep cycle soon.

MAVIS

You have Valium and you didn't tell me?

JAYCEE

You can't have any Valium.

MAVIS

Why not?

JAYCEE

*(indicating baby)*

MAVIS

Oh, that.

JAYCEE

Yeah, that.

MAVIS

But it's ok to give to the dogs?

JAYCEE

MAVIS

Is it? Ok to give to the dogs.

JAYCEE

I am 85% sure it's ok. In small doses.

MAVIS

Are you rescuing them or putting them down?

JAYCEE

70% sure.

MAVIS

I guess you are going to freak out about this too.

*She pulls out a six pack.*

JAYCEE

Are you kidding me? Don't you see the signs in the bathroom?

MAVIS

What.

JAYCEE

"When you're pregnant, you never drink alone."

MAVIS

Clever.

*Jaycee gets up and takes six-pack away. Mavis tries to wrestle it back but her weight is unwieldy.*

MAVIS

Nice. Steal from the pregnant girl.

JAYCEE

Oh please.

*Geri enters.*

GERI

Hey all. Book club meeting tonight, right?

JAYCEE

Hi Geri.

MAVIS

Oh, man.

JAYCEE

What?

MAVIS

Nothing. Reflux.

JAYCEE

Did you forget?

*Mavis makes a face.*

JAYCEE

Oh c'mon, Mavis. *Beer* you remember?

MAVIS

Calm down, crazy.

GERI

What?

JAYCEE

She forgot the snacks.

GERI

Fear not. (*Geri pulls out homemade snacks.*)

MAVIS

Geri, you are a solid addition to this book club. No matter what Jaycee says. (*She opens up the bin of homemade muffins.*)

JAYCEE

GERI

Are we just going to discuss the book or are we going to contrast it with the original?

JAYCEE

(giving Mavis side-eye) Some of us only wanted to read the original.

MAVIS

*(mouth full of muffin):* Geri, you have been holding out on us. These are ridiculous. Jaycee, you've gotta try this. *(Shoves one in Jaycee's mouth.)*

JAYCEE

*(mouth full):* I'm perfectly capable of - - oh my Gah, these are - what are these?

GERI

Eh, I experiment.

MAVIS

What, tell me you were a scientist too.

GERI

A chemist, actually. And baking is a science.

MAVIS

I've heard that: "Cooking is an art; baking is a science." Eating is a -

JAYCEE

You have a curious and complex work history, Geri.

GERI

So I bake. In my spare time. And now I have so much of it. My daughter used to love these. *(Trying to change the subject)* The book.

MAVIS

Well your daughter knows her stuff. You should have a bakery or something. These are amazing.

JAYCEE

She's right.



GERI

*(deliberately changing the subject):* What is with the zombie fascination these days, right?

MAVIS

Oh, are we done with this topic? *(meaning, the muffins)*

GERI

*(overlapping)* I mean, I get the whole vampire thing.

JAYCEE

*(to Mavis):* I think we're done.

GERI

*(continuous)* Dangerous. Sexy. Immortality, but at the price of your soul. Maybe. Depends on the history you are consulting of course.

JAYCEE

Maybe it's because subconsciously we all feel a kinship to zombies more than vampires now. Trudging around aimlessly in a world that moves too fast for us: too much information, too many choices, too much stuff. Mindlessly consuming everything - anything - on a path to nowhere. Driven by this uncontrollable hunger that can never be sated.

Forever wandering, forever homeless, forever alone.

*They ponder, eating muffins. Dogs bark. Maybe Mavis loses her appetite.*

MAVIS

I hate zombies.

JAYCEE

Why did you choose this then?

MAVIS

It seemed funny. At the time. *Beat.* Hindsight, you know?

*The room has grown kind of morose.*

MAVIS

We could watch something instead.

JAYCEE

None of the TVs work.

MAVIS

Man, it feels so homey in here I forgot.

GERI

Yeah, it does feel homey. Homi-er. Than it did. Can I pop this? (*regarding popcorn*)

JAYCEE

It's part of this new initiative. I told my boss that people wanted things to feel lived in. And it's been working out. It's almost like...I'm good at my job.

GERI

Remind me to tell you about when I was a nurse. I'm gonna pop this. (*Geri leaves with popcorn.*)

MAVIS

Who is "your boss" exactly?

JAYCEE

Wes. Do you know him?

MAVIS

"Wes the Mess?" He still a travesty?

JAYCEE

What do you mean?

MAVIS

You must have heard.

JAYCEE

Must have heard what?

MAVIS

*(acts as if she is speaking through a loud speaker)* "Find me in kitchen, in bathroom or bedding/ Jeanine, won't you please reconsider your wedding?" *(She laughs then realizes.)* Oh. You haven't heard.

JAYCEE

MAVIS

Yeah, he, I dunno. Went through a bad breakup or something. Got drunk at work when his ex came to the store with her new fiancée. I didn't see her, but we all heard it. Somehow he corralled the loudspeaker, locked the door and recited a series of sonnets to her.

JAYCEE

Wes. Manager of the Bed & Living Room section?

MAVIS

Security had to tell him she was waiting outside for him. It's wrong. He was transferred to the bane of store sales and told he'd be fired if he didn't get his act together.

JAYCEE

He seems so together. Well. Not together. But like a grown up. Sort of anal retentive and socially awkward. You know. Like he has a mortgage. Or a savings account.

*Geri re-enters with popcorn.*

MAVIS

Or a bank account.

JAYCEE

You don't have a bank account?

MAVIS

Judgement.

*Mavis picks up "Judgement Jar" which is a craft project on steroids. Jaycee takes out a quarter and puts it in the jar which is already pretty full.*

GERI

Whoa. Is this the *produit fini*?

MAVIS

JAYCEE

Behold: The Judgement Jar.

(begrudgingly) Judgement Jar.

GERI

It came out really well.

MAVIS

There's so much stuff in the art section.

GERI (to Jaycee)

What'd you do this time?

JAYCEE

We were talking /about -

MAVIS

Jaycee was judging my financial situation.

JAYCEE

We were simply discussing what it means to be "grown up."

GERI

Grown-up. That's the biggest lie.

MAVIS

What?

GERI

Oh, I thought I'd get to a point and feel, "I'm an adult." I still don't know.

MAVIS

Are you serious? (*Looks to Jaycee*)

JAYCEE

Me? No. I don't know anything. And I do have a bank account.

*Mavis holds up Judgement Jar.*

I wasn't-

Fine. (She adds another quarter.)

MAVIS

*Some people* don't have stable jobs and bank accounts, Jaycee.

GERI

(to Mavis, indicating Judgement Jar) Looks like you're creating one.

JAYCEE

I don't work here!

MAVIS

Jaycee!

GERI

Neither do I.

MAVIS/ JAYCEE

What?!

GERI

No. I work here. I did at least. Until the night I met you.

JAYCEE

Is that why you had an electric razor and not an actual weapon?

GERI

No, they never give us actual weapons. It was my last night. They let me go. Said "downsizing" but they just think I'm too old.

MAVIS

Too old!

JAYCEE

Oh, come on, you can't be more than

JAYCEE

MAVIS

50

65?

*Jaycee glares at Mavis.*

MAVIS

What?

GERI

You don't know. It doesn't matter if I'm 50 or 65 or (glancing at Jaycee) 42.

JAYCEE

*(quietly):* I'm 35.

GERI

*(continuing):* After 40 you become invisible. You want the greatest lie ever told? It's that women are people. Just the same as everyone else. Women have a shelf-life.

Once you are no longer sexy or cute or - I dunno - of child-bearing capabilities (*looks to Mavis*) No offense.

MAVIS

Not even mine.

JAYCEE

What?

GERI

*(continuous)* You are of no use to society. After 40, people would rather you just didn't exist, and if they ignore you enough, you kind of don't. Men hate us because they don't want to screw us anymore and women hate us because we are what they will inevitably become.

That's the greatest lie ever told.

*Pause as all ponder.*

*Jaycee pops a beer. Hands it to Geri and opens one for herself. Throws a can of RC Cola or an equally funny non-alcoholic drink to Mavis. They clink.*

JAYCEE

To Geri. Welcome to the club.

*Lights.*

## **SCENE 9**

*Daytime in the store. Jaycee is carrying an assortment of kitchen baking items across the space.*

WES

*(rushing to catch her):* Jaycee.

JAYCEE

Wes.

WES

Jaycee.

JAYCEE



Wes.

WES

Jaycee. I have some - Uh, it looks like you have an assortment of kitchen items in your hands.

JAYCEE

Yes.

WES

Are those from our appliances section?

JAYCEE

That could be true. Wes, I have an idea. About a kind of store promotion.

*They both look at the items then at each other.*

WES

Hold that thought. One. (moment)

*(Calling off to Mavis) I found her!*

*Mavis enters, vaguely disguised.*

WES (cont.)

Here she is. Jaycee, this is May - May -

MAVIS

-vis - son.

JAYCEE

May -

MAVIS

-vison.

WES

Mayvison, this is Jaycee.

MAVIS

Jaycee.

JAYCEE

Mavis-son.

MAVIS

What an odd name.

WES

Jaycee.

JAYCEE

Wes?

WES

May- May I call you May? (*Realizing the pun.*) Huh. That was.

MAVIS

You may.

WES

Now, Jaycee - she is currently our top seller. So, have you met?

*Jaycee looks blankly from one to the other. Is the jig up?*

WES (cont.)

What with you both from the Topeka, Kentucky store, I thought there was a possibility that—

OVERHEAD PAGE

Wes to Customer Care. Wes to Customer Care please.

WES

Well, uh uh, I'll leave you to get yourselves sorted. I've got to. (*points to overhead speaker*) Oh, and Jaycee, I love what you did in the kids section - a human-sized chrysalis!

*They watch him go.*

MAVIS

That is one awkward dude.

JAYCEE

What is he talking about?

MAVIS

I may have created... an interactive metamorphosis experience in the children's section. You know, caterpillar to butterfly.

JAYCEE

You what?

MAVIS

It's amazing what you can create from found objects -

JAYCEE

Why didn't you tell me?

MAVIS

- willow sprigs, decoupage, pipe cleaners. Actually, I've been feeling incredibly creative lately. Is this what nesting is?

OVERHEAD PAGE

Wes to customer care. Wes to Customer Care please.

JAYCEE

Look, Mavis-SON- What are you doing here?

MAVIS

Hello, I live here.

JAYCEE

I mean during the daytime.

MAVIS

I'm breaking out of my cocoon.

JAYCEE

You are jeopardizing my job!

MAVIS

You don't even work here!

JAYCEE

Keep your voice down.

MAVIS

Oh, he thinks I'm from the Topeka Store to check on "Quality Control."

JAYCEE

What's that?

MAVIS

I don't know.

JAYCEE

Don't you think they might notice -

MAVIS

What?

JAYCEE

I mean, you're not exactly inconspicuous. (*referring to pregnancy*)

MAVIS

(*noticing a badge on Jaycee*): Did you win employee of the month?

JAYCEE

Maybe.

MAVIS

I *worked* here and I never won employee of the month.

JAYCEE

You were embezzling.

MAVIS

Supplementing my wages.

JAYCEE

Stealing from the company.

MAVIS

ToMAYto, toMAHto.

JAYCEE

Not really.

MAVIS

What are you doing with a middling assortment of kitchen items?

JAYCEE

For Geri's baking. I thought. If we could get the kitchens hooked up.

MAVIS

I'm really good at fireworks.

JAYCEE

I don't think that's the same thing.

MAVIS

*(seriously)*: Jaycee, you gotta let go of the reins a little bit.

JAYCEE

Let go -

MAVIS

C'mon, sweetie, you're a little -

JAYCEE

MAVIS

Particular.

Anal retentive.

JAYCEE

I am not an- (anal retentive)

MAVIS

You gotta let people in.

JAYCEE

I AM letting -

MAVIS

Say no more. *(she rushes off)*

JAYCEE

Mavis –

MAVIS

(calling over her shoulder): I'll say it's for Quality Control.

JAYCEE

*Wes rushes back in.*

WES

Sorry about that. Did May have to leave?

JAYCEE

She. Let's not. Look: I have a promotional idea.

WES

As you know, I am trying to be more open, - "try one new thing a day that scares you" and all that -

JAYCEE

It involves an ad in the store circular.

WES

Whatever it is, I am 100% on board - I love you. It. I love it.

JAYCEE

But you haven't even -

WES

*(more confidentially, about "Mavison"):* Are they trying to woo you back? Is that it?

*Jaycee makes indiscernible face and sound.*

WES

I knew it. Poachers. Well, they are not taking away my top employee. No way. I have to schedule a team meeting. A team meeting, Topeka!

*He rushes off.*

JAYCEE

So I'll take that as a yes on the ad?

*Jaycee considers. Goes off towards a kitchen.*



## SCENE 10

*Nighttime at the Store. Jaycee, Mavis and Geri are brushing their teeth in a toothbrushing ballet of sorts with coordinated spitting. Intermittent dog-barking sounds.*

GERI

I was considering coming back to work.

JAYCEE

Yeah, but didn't they fire you?

GERI

It was technically "downsizing."

MAVIS

Geez, don't be insensitive, Jaycee.

MAVIS & GERI

Judgement jar!

JAYCEE

I wasn't -

MAVIS

Remember what we talked about today. (regarding letting people in and being anal retentive)

JAYCEE

(grumbling) I wouldn't call that a talk.

GERI

Not all of us can be employee of the month.

JAYCEE

*(defensive)*: Technically, I don't even get paid.

GERI

I mean, why does she get to come back? *(re: Mavis)*

MAVIS

I'm undercover.

JAYCEE

Ok, well. I don't know that you're really- *(undercover)*

GERI

I can be undercover too. I used to have a PI firm. Retirement is boring. I just sit in the living room section all day trying to read in Swedish.

MAVIS

*(muffled while brushing teeth)* You used to be a Private Investigator?

JAYCEE

You could get out.

GERI

Where?

JAYCEE

Like, of the store. Out, I dunno - there?

GERI

Why?

JAYCEE

To.

*All are at a loss.*

*They all burst out laughing.*

MAVIS	JAYCEE	GERI
Why would we ever leave?!	Oh my god –	Oh, oh oh oh, it's too funny.
What, to return to the post-apocalyptic hellscape of that uninhabitable junkyard?	Could you imagine?	We have everything here!
To re-enter the dungheap of broken promises and wasted dreams?	It's like - la la la - I have everything I need and I'm going to, what, oh, I can't -- I can't–	And we don't have to clean!
To be absorbed into the miserable miasma of fug and frustration built on the back of broken bodies and shattered souls?	<i>Ad lib.</i>	Oh, it hurts. It hurts.
I did. I did pee my pants.		Stop. Stop. I'm gonna pee my pants.
Well, just a little.		Yeah, me too.

*Collective sigh.*

MAVIS

At least the TVs work now.

GERI

Yes, and thank you for that. (to Jaycee)

JAYCEE

(proud): And the showers.

MAVIS

And the kitchens.

GERI

The -

JAYCEE

(*elbowing her*): Mavis, that was supposed to be a surprise.

GERI

You got the kitchens to work?

MAVIS/ JAYCEE

(*awkwardly and half-heartedly*): Surpriiiiise.

## **Scene 11**

*Wes leading a staff meeting. All are in attendance. Mavis and Geri are vaguely disguised.*

WES

Alrighty. Thank you all for coming to this impromptu emergency staff meeting. You may have noticed that things are changing around here. And hopefully for the better. Ooh - (He notices a tickle. He removes a butterfly from his clothes and gently sets it free.) - you scared me, little one. (Smiling) From our new Butterfly Experience. Be sure to walk through when you have a moment.

I have a few announcements. [*Clears throat.*]

One: As you may have noted, all of the bathrooms, living rooms, and kitchens are now fully functional. This is for demonstration purposes only. We don't want people *actually* using the toilets. They can run the faucets and flush the toilets, but as for actual public urination, that is strictly verboten. For staff as well. If customers need to use the facilities, continue to direct them to the ones in the atrium with stalls for privacy.

Item B - or 2. I started with numbers. Item 2: Standardized-livers will be joining us in some models. Not the food, <yuck>, the people, <Ooooh>. "Standardized Livers." These are actors who will be portraying families, using the various facilities. They will not [*he looks up to Jaycee in the crowd of employees*] will they actually use the toilets? [*She does not answer.*] I don't - I don't think they will - maybe the showers. Anyway. They will interact with the customers as if the customers are guests in their home. This is a pilot program in Zone 2, which brings me to:

Item C: We have two promotions to announce: Jeff is moving out of our department to head the kids' section. Congratulations, Jeff and keep out of the ball pit, am I right? [*looks up to no acknowledgement of employees, gets nothing. Then mostly to himself*] Never know what you are gonna find in there. [Moving on] And Jaycee is now our Liaison for Modern Living, a newly created position which will facilitate the expansion of our Standardized Living program, so the customers can actually see the units in use in real time. Congratulations, Jaycee. Maybe you'd like to come up here and tell us a little about what to expect.

*Jaycee joins Wes in front of the staff meeting.*

JAYCEE

Thank you, Wes.

*She pulls out a stack of index cards.*

I was prepared for just this eventuality.

Hello.

*Then reading:*

Hello Duktig employees,

Standardized-Livers are now in our midst

So, I have prepared you a poem

To make you more comfortable with this

How will you know these Standard-Livers?

With uniforms or with a pin?

The magic of the Standardized Living program is:

They're intended to blend in

You might find someone in your bedroom

Or your bathroom using supplies

No need to avert your attention

Or take this as a surprise

Livers will be in your kitchens  
on the couches, and yes, on the beds  
Be prepared for the smell of scratch muffins  
Chocolate chip cookies and freshly baked bread

Extended family dinners  
Will be held weekly Sunday night  
Fridays we'll screen movies with popcorn  
In that living room there on the right

Monday nights in the kids bedrooms  
is "Pillow Fights and Make-a-Fort"  
Tuesdays mid-day in that kitchen  
is "Cakes and Fire-a-Torte"

2 to 4pm daily is siesta  
In this bedroom section on the map  
That's when you can snuggle up,  
Meditate or take a nap

Bathrooms all are functional  
the decor extremely zen  
And nightly baths will be drawn  
regularly between 8 and 10

Our latest crib ad promotion  
*Doubles as a pregnancy test*  
The first kid proven positive through it  
Will enjoy all of Duktig's very best

That's right! Duktig has agreed to raise it  
(Sorry, company parents don't qualify!)  
But otherwise one little lucky kid  
Will be set with Duktig for life!

So: I'd say welcome your Standardized Livers  
To your living rooms near and far  
The only problem with that is:  
You may not know who they are!



Thank you.

*Moment.*

*Then enthusiastic applause from Wes.*

WES

You-. A poem. That was. That is a top-notch employee right there. I love you. It. I love it. Well done, Topeka.

*Smiles a little too long before getting back down to business:*

OK.

OK.

You should all know that interviews for Standardized Livers are ongoing in the office section.

Fourth and finally, as you may or may not have heard, the Swedish parent company of DUKTIG recently sold the store to our new parent-company Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso.

*[murmurs from the employees]*

*[addressing the agitation]* I know, I know. Kabushiki assures me that they are really on board with the forward thinking of this department. So, while, yes, there may be some changes, overall, I think this is a good thing.

*[he says the following very quickly to avoid upsetting anyone]* Oh, ah, and one more thing, uh, ... this Wednesday and Thursday, you will all be required to sign up in the breakroom for an overnight shift to reorient the store to make the layout more Feng Shui.

Thank you. That is all.

*He steps down.*

WES (cont.)

Topeka. That poem. I didn't think about unmade beds once.

JAYCEE

About the parent company –

WES

I gotta put a pin in that Topeka because I have a follow-up meeting with corporate and I cannot wait to tell them good news for once! "If you make a date you can't be late!"

*Wes runs off as Geri and Mavis rush on.*

MAVIS

GERI

JAYCEE!

There's our gal!

JAYCEE

You two have to stop showing up. You are going to blow my cover.

MAVIS

GERI

I feel disgusting all the time  
and I no longer care!

No one pays attention to me.

JAYCEE

(urgently, to Geri and Mavis) Did you hear –

*Wes rushes back on.*

WES

Topeka–

*Wes sees Mavis but not Geri.*

Sorry, excuse me –May–vison. Back for more quality testing so soon?

MAVIS

Mmmmm.

GERI

Wesley.

*Wes does not see Geri but the other women do.*

WES

Mavison, sorry to interrupt. Jaycee, could I - could I borrow your index cards to share with corporate?

JAYCEE

Uh.

GERI

Look, Wes, I'm not wearing pants!

JAYCEE

Uh. Yes. Um. Here. About that corporate takeover—....?

*She hands him the cards.*

*(Throughout the following, Wes continues to speak directly to Jaycee without noticing Geri; Jaycee and Mavis interject listening sounds "uh huh" "mmm" "hm," trying to pay attention to Wes while also aware of the craziness that is Geri.)*

WES	GERI
-----	------

<p>Thank you. Yes, I love these.</p> <p>JAYCEE</p> <p>I'm so glad, but --</p>	<p><i>(ad lib. Throughout the following, Geri possibly: dances, shimmies, screams, jumps, pleads, whispers, performs accents, waves interpretive scarves, parades by with pyrotechnics and employs funnier tactics. Imagine the "Oh my God" monologue from Blackstache.)</i></p>
<p>Hold that thought, Jaycee. /</p> <p>I may have them framed.</p> <p>(Wes drops to sotto voce)</p> <p>I mean, /after I share them with corporate. And I really want to thank you for putting your whole heart and soul into this venture. If I could I would replay the last 10 minutes of my life because. I mean, "proud" does not really even cover it. (optional: In all of my time - and I've been here a while - I won't tell you how long, but - I have never actually - how do I say this? I. You are.) I want you</p> <p>To</p> <p>tototototototototo</p> <p>Really think about (or stew or ruminate or um, <i>tänka på</i> as they say) -</p> <p>Was that the intercom?</p> <p>(Jaycee and Mavis shake their heads, deer in the headlights.)</p>	<p>/FIRE! FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p>  <p>/FIRE! FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>I'M ON FIRE, WES!</p> <p>FIRE! FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>FIRE! FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>FIRE! FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>WES, I'M ON FIRE! FIRE!</p> <p>FIRE! I'M ON FIRE! FIRE! FIRE!</p> <p>I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>FIRE! FIRE! I'M ON FIRE!</p> <p>FI!!REEEEEEEEEEEEE!</p> <p>FI!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!RRRRRRRRRRREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!</p>

WES

Well you know what they say: "There's time to meet and there's time to eat."

*He starts to leave.*

MAVIS

(re: Wes "ism"): Who? Who says that?

WES

I'm going to find some frames in the home goods section.

*He exits.*

JAYCEE

But --Wait! Wes!

MAVIS

(regarding Geri's escapade) Wow, he really didn't see you.

GERI

I told you: i n v i s i b l e.

JAYCEE

Wes - the corporate takeover!

GERI

(pondering) I wonder how much I could steal before anyone noticed.

JAYCEE

Did you guys hear--

MAVIS

Oh here it comes.

GERI

You got a promotion!

JAYCEE

I know, but –

MAVIS/GERI

Yaaaaay!

MAVIS

I worked here and I never got a promotion.

GERI

I made a special batch for the occasion.

JAYCEE

But did you hear –

MAVIS

And -

GER

*AND* -

MAVIS

People seem to love the Standardized Living idea -

GERI

Which means we will have more roommates

MAVIS

- and more legitimate jobs!

GER

Yaaay!

MAVIS

Yaaaay!

JAYCEE

But did you hear -

GERI

The part about a foreign company taking over the store

MAVIS

the hard earned work we've done?

and possibly threatening all of

JAYCEE

It's our life's work.

It's my life's work.

MAVIS

You got a promotion.

GERI/ MAVIS

Yaaaaaaay!

*Lights.*

## **SCENE 12**

*Night at the store. Jaycee is asleep; Mavis is singing to her and stroking her head.*

MAVIS

(sung as a lullaby)

SO PASS THE JOINT AND HAVE A BEER

DON'T YOU WORRY - THE GANG'S ALL HERE

*Geri enters with a new batch of muffins.*

GERI

(re: song) That's pretty.

MAVIS

It's a heavy metal song; I kinda remixed it.

GERI

Dare I say, *maternal*.

MAVIS

Ha. Ha.

GERI



So, how is our little Liaison for Modern Living?

MAVIS

Asleep finally.

*Geri offers her the fresh muffins. They eat them through the following.*

GERI

I thought she was never going to calm down about that corporate takeover.

MAVIS

Well, Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso isn't exactly known for their equanimity.

GERI

So I've heard.

MAVIS

Sandra from Linens told me they bought all the stores in Arkansas and converted them into trampoline parks.

GERI

Did you tell Jaycee?

MAVIS

Are you kidding? She was still freaking out about the Topeka Store being converted into an Amazon Warehouse.

GERI

There really is a Topeka store, huh.

MAVIS

Yes, but naturally it's in Kansas. Where Topeka actually is.

GERI

That's what started the panic attack?

MAVIS

"We're making a house a home," "we're making a house a home." She kept saying over and over.

GERI

Bless her heart.

But, it does feel... (like a home.)

MAVIS

Yeah, it feels...(like what home is supposed to feel like.)

So, I slipped her some Valium.

*Dogs bark.*

GERI

MAVIS

I mean, the dogs survived.

*They eat their muffins.*

MAVIS

You know, these are the only things I can eat without feeling nauseous. I don't think I ever told you that.

GERI

They're packed with protein. And hidden nutrients. I've been fermenting.

MAVIS

Huh. This may be the spawn's favorite thus far.

GERI

Oh, you've given it a name I see.

MAVIS

GERI

That's the first time you've mentioned it since I've been here.

MAVIS

Oh yeah, well I forget. I mean, not that I'm pregnant. I can't forget that. Because I'm so friggin' uncomfortable all the time. I feel like I'm personally paying for original sin, ya know. But I forget that, like, there's a living thing I'm supposed to take care of after this.

GERI

Well, once they're here, they don't let you forget that.

MAVIS

You got a spawn of your own, if memory serves.

GERI

It's complicated. (*Then: referring to Mavis' situation*) You wanna talk about it?

MAVIS

It's complicated.

Can you believe that advertising promotion Jaycee arranged? A kid taken care of for life by a company?

GERI

Too bad you worked here.

MAVIS

Yeah, too bad. Too bad you worked here too.

GERI

I think I'm about 30 years too late for that offer.

MAVIS

Your daughter's thirty?

*A moment.*

GERI

Twenty-eight. On Tuesday.

*A moment.*

I don't know. I guess the simple explanation is that my daughter is quite a heartbreaker. Including mine.

We haven't talked in over a year.

I don't know. I don't know. She gets really intensely involved in something and it takes up all of her attention. But then she'll drop it completely and it's onto the next thing.

MAVIS

I can't imagine where she gets it.

GERI

What's that supposed to mean?

MAVIS

In the time I've known you, you have mentioned owning a bookstore, being a chemist, then a nurse and having a PI firm - and there was your Hare Krishna phase, the winter you got really into gliding, and I firmly believe you knit that.

GERI

It's not the same thing. Yes, I get intensely interested in different *topics*, but I don't do it with *people*.

MAVIS

I'd never want my own kid to have my genes - doomed to turn out like me.

GERI

She has broken up two engagements that I know of. She was even with someone here for a while. Then she was off to Bali and Prague and consulting an intuitive about her angel numbers. She's one of those people that veers in any direction just to avoid herself. The last time she flitted in, I told her to stay with one thing or one person for more than two months or not to come back at all. And she hasn't.

Last I heard, she's in Japan.

Guess I'm not a glowing endorsement for motherhood at the moment.

*A moment.*

MAVIS

I guess you wouldn't believe me if I told you it wasn't mine.

GERI

It can sure feel that way.

MAVIS

It sure can.

GERI

You know, I really enjoyed your Butterfly Experience. It was almost - magical.

*Lights.*

### **SCENE 13**

*Mid-morning at the store. The office section. Jaycee is conducting an interview for the Standardized Living Program. She speaks to a candidate in the audience.*

JAYCEE

Welcome (checking her notes) Talia. Thanks for coming in today to interview for our brand new Standardized Living Program. You can take a seat. Make yourself comfortable.

I'm Jaycee, the Liaison for Modern Living.

This will be, uh, - a sort of unconventional interview process - more of an audition, I guess. Instead of conversing, you will be using the furniture - just, kind of imagine you are at home, and do your thing. Like - that - yeah, that is great.

And I'll - observe.

Pretend I'm not here and you are - going about your day. Just like - that - exactly.

*Talia takes out cheerios, pours a bowl and starts to eat.*

Eating breakfast- totally, you can totally eat.

I see you've prepared for this. Interesting, complicated choice.

(Laughs.)

I used to - when I was a kid and ate cheerios, there'd always be a few swimming in the bowl with the leftover milk, and when I'd dump them down the drain, I'd feel so bad. There they were. In the sink. Soggy, lonely, forever surprised with their little open mouths. Every single time.

Like, these cheerios have been surrounded by this huge cheerio family their whole life- brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins - and what if - what if this one I dumped in the sink was just separated from his cheerio wife or brother or what if this cheerio just lost her cheerio child down the drain.

*A shift.*

There's this illness, ya know, in Sweden. It's so weird.

Uh.

Children fall asleep. For weeks,

months,

sometimes years.

No one knows what causes it and there's no cure.

It's called Resignation Syndrome. (Internal hmmm.) Sounds like giving up.

It only affects children of refugee families seeking asylum. Doctors think the children are so traumatized by losing their home and trying to find a new home that they just

fall asleep.

It's so - (sad)

Everyone deserves a home, don't you think?

Ah, laying down I see - totally fine. Just like home.

Talia?

Talia?

*Talia fell asleep.*

Are you - (Sleeping people remind Jaycee of babies.)

*Awww.*

Oh, you look so cozy all cuddled up. Throw blankets were a brilliant choice.

(whispering) The interview is over.

(whispering) You are hired.

*Lights.*

## **SCENE 14**

*Daytime at the store. Wes approaches Jaycee who is scattering laundry artistically around a bedroom display.*

WES

Jaycee.

JAYCEE

Wes.

WES

Jaycee. Since you got the promotion, I thought it'd be an appropriate. Well, not appropriate. (*noticing the mess*) What are you -

JAYCEE

*Making it feel lived in. (She continues to put pjs under pillows, hang underwear from bedposts, etc.)* Lias-ing.

WES



Leee?

JAYCEE

Cause I'm the Liaison for Modern Living. And I've got to make a good impression with the whole Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso thing –

WES

Yes, well that.

JAYCEE

Aren't you concerned?

WES

We can't control the world - only how we react to the world.

JAYCEE

Yes, but -

WES

*(getting what Jaycee is doing)* Ah, I see. I am okay with this. And it's a mess. And it's ok. Because I go with the flow now. Which brings me to ... *(he surreptitiously checks a list he wrote on his hand)* Yes. *(regathering his steam)*

JAYCEE

Is that an agenda - on your hand.

WES

*(ignoring her)* Uh, Jaycee. Topeka. Jaycee. One, that flyer idea was -

JAYCEE

WES

innovative?

scientifically implausible.

JAYCEE

And yet it works. I got my roommates to try it –and see? Two negatives and one positive.

WES

JAYCEE

Oh, my one roommate worked briefly as a chemist and the other one is, uh, expecting.

WES

Well, then technically, that makes your roommate the first positive!

JAYCEE

She's disqualified cause she kind of worked here?

WES

Anyone I know?

JAYCEE

It's not important. You were saying?

WES

I was saying...(checks hand-list) Oh, yes. Item B: With us no longer being boss and employee. I was wondering if it'd be ok - if it's ok with you, that is, if I - um,

–could we move away from the bed-things?

JAYCEE

Sure.

*Wes moves away from one bed and in to another accidentally cause they are surrounded.*

WES

They do seem to be everywhere.

JAYCEE

You wanted to ask?

WES

I wanted to. Ask you out. On a date.

*Short pause.*

Or not. It doesn't have to be a date. It could just be out.

JAYCEE

Of the store?

WES

Or in. In the store. If that'd make you more comfortable.

JAYCEE

A store date?

WES

Uh, yes. We could. *(He looks around. They are surrounded by beds.)*

JAYCEE

We could—?

WES

Oh. No, no. Not the - I mean, we'd go somewhere more, more - to the kitchen or dining room section.

JAYCEE

When?

WES

When?

JAYCEE

When do you want to go to the kitchen section?

WES

Are you free tonight?

JAYCEE

I can't tonight. With the Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso Rep coming - and I've got this overnight fengshui thing I've gotta do.

*Wes looks momentarily disappointed then realizes.*

WES

Oh! Tonight. Right. I do too. Yes, well, maybe

JAYCEE

After?

WES

After? *(He looks at beds.)*

JAYCEE

We gotta eat sometime.

WES

Right. After. In the kitchen section.

JAYCEE

Sounds like a date.

WES

It does.

*Wes doesn't know what to do. He awkwardly exits unable to hide his smile.*

*Mavis pops up outta nowhere.*

MAVIS

*(echoing)* Sounds like a date!

JAYCEE

Mavis!

MAVIS

Topeka and Wes the Mess.

JAYCEE

Where did you come from!?

MAVIS

Is it - is it a date?

JAYCEE

Aren't you supposed to be walking the dogs?

MAVIS

Stop trying to change the subject.

JAYCEE

Did you?

MAVIS

Of course. And if you want to bring a gentleman caller home under my roof, young lady, you'll have to abide by my rules.

*Mavis squats down to relieve some back tension.*

JAYCEE

You do realize we're squatting.

MAVIS

I'm squatting. You're lazy.

JAYCEE

You know what I mean.

*Geri crosses by in chef garb with baking supplies.*

MAVIS

Hey Ger, Jaycee's got a date.

JAYCEE

Geri! You can't be here during the day!

GERI

I am literally invisible.

JAYCEE

You are wearing a chef hat!

GERI

No one can see me.

*Geri exits.*

MAVIS

Wait, what's Geri doing here?

JAYCEE

She's my head chef.

*Lights.*

## SCENE 15

*The wee hours at the store. Wes and Jaycee are asleep in bed. Fully clothed. Mavis passes by having just come from the bathroom in the middle of the night. Can't make it back to her room, figures she'll just crash on this bed. Lands on Wes. Various noises of surprise. Then dogs barking.*

WES	MAVIS	JAYCEE
Ahhhh Wha- what, who's there? Who –	What the - Jaycee! Is that - Oh, oh man, my back –	

Oh, I got a cramp. In my leg. Oh oh oh, you landed right on my bad - are there dogs barking?	Is there a guy here? Shit, the dogs. Jaycee, is that you?	(waking): Huh? Aw, what? What is going? Where's the - Mavis? Oh, the dogs. Is that -
--	---	--

GERI

(entering, cutting everyone off, holding a frother or equally funny piece of kitchen equipment): Hey. Hey! What is going on? Everybody calm down.

Dogs bark.

WES	MAVIS	JAYCEE
	Is that a	
stun gun?		
		milk frother?

WES

Are there dogs here?

MAVIS

Were you having a sleep over?

JAYCEE

We were re-orienting the store if you must know.

MAVIS

(sarcastically): I bet you were.

GERI

(truthfully): I bet they were. I'll go check on the dogs.



*Geri exits.*

*Wes is trying to take in the situation.*

WES

Why /are -

JAYCEE

(to Mavis) We were. No one one else signed up for the overnight re-orientation shift. Despite the fact that our life's work is in jeopardy!

*Dogs quiet.*

MAVIS

I can't imagine why.

JAYCEE

(continued): So Wes and I -

*Store lights abruptly come up.*

*Collective groan, sounds of discomfort.*

MAVIS

JAYCEE

GERI

What the -

The lights are never

The dogs are fine.

on this early.

What's with -

WES

(realizing): Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso.

MAVIS/ JAYCEE/ GERI

What?

WES

Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso. They are coming today. To evaluate our practices. They are sending a rep. Oh. Oh oh. I cannot control the world only how I react to the world. /I cannot control the world only how I react to the world. I cannot control the world only how I react to the world. *(repeated until Wes' next line)*

JAYCEE

/I thought they were coming tomorrow.

MAVIS

It is tomorrow.

JAYCEE

They're not coming at 6 in the morning.

GERI

When I was working in tech –

WES

(a step behind): There are people here.

GERI

(musing to herself): I think Tokyo is about 15 hours ahead.

JAYCEE

Yes.

GERI

So they might be working on Tokyo time.

WES

Why are there people here?

JAYCEE

They work here?

WES

Are you -

MAVIS

Living here?

JAYCEE

Mavis!

MAVIS

Yes.

GERI

Well, it was fun while it lasted.

JAYCEE

It's part of the Standardized Living Initiative?

WES

Wait.

*Jaycee feels too guilty to deceive someone so earnest.*

JAYCEE

Ok. Yes. Technically. We *do* live here.

WES

You've been-

JAYCEE

But also technically. We *don't* work here.

MAVIS

So technically, it's like an even exchange for services rendered.

WES

But I promoted you.

JAYCEE

Right.

WES

You were employee of the month.

JAYCEE

And I am really proud of that.

GERI

I've got muffins to bake. (She exits.)

WES

(about Geri): *Wait, I know you. You were there... - (Mavis) and you were there - (a la Wizard of Oz)*

JAYCEE

Wes.

WES

You were all right here all along.

JAYCEE

I'm sorry I –

WES

I trusted you. I was being flexible.

MAVIS

Well. (As in, “were you really flexible?”)

JAYCEE

I *did* tell you I didn't work here. Remember?

WES

I thought that was a poetic commentary on the nature of work and play!

JAYCEE

Well, it was the truth!

WES

I - I can't. I can't believe—. You are going to have to - I've got to go. They could be here.

*Wes exits abruptly.*

MAVIS

Well that went well.

JAYCEE

What are we gonna do?

MAVIS

Well, good news is: he can't fire us cause we don't work here.

JAYCEE

Yes, but it's bigger than that, don't you see? It's about what we've started here. The community we've created. It's about the cooking classes, and the after-school tutoring.

MAVIS

You started a tutoring program?

JAYCEE

I was going to put you in charge of the Children's Section.

MAVIS

You were?

JAYCEE

You could run the weekly family dinners, and the game nights, the afternoon teas and the book club, the art and archery classes -

MAVIS

I was looking forward to those.

JAYCEE

It's about the writing circle, the living room aerobics, the wood-burning courses. Don't they see we are starting something big here?

MAVIS

A commune?

JAYCEE

A new way to live! A real community. A place everyone can call home. I'm not leaving Duktig -

MAVIS

Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso.

JAYCEE

Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso - without a fight.

MAVIS

Or an arrest warrant.

JAYCEE

*(regarding new store name)* We should abbreviate that. For a better mouth feel.

MAVIS

Are they actually changing the name of the store?

JAYCEE

I don't know. I'm just saying it doesn't exactly roll off the tongue.

GERI

(from off): Mavis, Muffins are out in 10!

MAVIS

Yes, Ma'am!

JAYCEE

(exiting): Wes!

(MAVIS)

Jaycee! Geri!

(last resort) Wes?

(cramping) Ah. Oh. No. Nooooooooooooooooooooooh. Nope.

(to belly) You are gonna stay in there until this world is not a crumbling morass of misery and chaos, you hear me?

NOT TODAY SATAN!

*She hobbles towards muffins, holding in her "periphery."*

## **SCENE 16**

*The floor of the store. Wes interacts with customers. He is buzzing.*

WES

The fourth kitchen display on the left is starting the "Better Brunches" presentation in five minutes, or "Shower Games" will be at the third bathroom on the right in ten.

*Jaycee enters hurriedly.*

JAYCEE



Wes, I've been looking for you everywhere!

WES

(to customers, deliberately ignoring Jaycee): "Naptime: Not just for Kids" begins in Children's Bedrooms in half an hour!

JAYCEE

Wes!

WES

(to customers) The ballpit -

JAYCEE

(to customers) -IS AN UNSANITARY CESSPOOL OF GERMS. Which is why we removed it and installed a communal bath.

WES

Jaycee.

JAYCEE

I see I got your attention.

WES

Did you really get rid of the ball pit?

JAYCEE

And donated all the balls to local homeless dogs.

WES

Local? You mean *the dogs in the building*?

JAYCEE

They are part of the “Reducing Recidivism through Therapy Dog Training” Courses.

WES

Wait. *ARE THERE CONVICTS IN THE STORE?*

JAYCEE

Only nonviolent offenders –

WES

A representative from Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso will be here any minute. And we’ve got to make a good impression.

JAYCEE

What happened to “I can’t control the world” and all that breathing and your meditation app?

WES

Well, maybe people aren’t actually capable of change.

*Wes turns to leave, but Jaycee stops him with her next line.*

*The following Swedish phrases can be projected somewhere in translation or shared in some creative directorial choice...*

JAYCEE

Det blir aldrig som man tänkt sig. (Things never turn out the way you imagined.)

WES

Den som gapar efter mycket, mister ofta hela stycket. (He who bids for much, often loses all.)

JAYCEE

Bara döda fiskar följer strömmen. (Only dead fish follow the stream.)

WES

Bättre fly än illa fäkta. (He who fights and runs away may live to fight another day.)

JAYCEE

Att skiljas är att dö en smula. (To separate is to die a little.)

WES (realizing)

Borta bra men hemma bäst. (Away is good but home is best.)

JAYCEE

*Att våga är att tappa fotfästet en stund, att inte våga är att förlora sig själv. (To dare is to lose your foothold for a moment, to not dare is to lose yourself.)*

WES

*Gräv där du står. (Dig where you stand. /Bloom where you are planted.)*

JAYCEE

You learned Swedish.

WES

I wanted to grow.

*Mavis runs on. Followed by Geri.*

MAVIS

We brought muffins! /

GERI

As an apology.

WES

You –

GERI

Wes, dear, can I just say– it’s good to see you.

WES

Geri?

When did you get here?

GERI

(said in the clear) I’ve been here.

I’ve been here the whole time.

WES

You – you can’t be here.

MAVIS

Why?

WES

Because you don’t work here!

*Dogs bark.*

GERI

JAYCEE

Try the muffins.

We're upsetting the dogs.

MAVIS

What happened to "you no longer need to roam," –

WES

JAYCEE

Jaycee, I cannot –

Wes, I was going to tell you –

LOUDSPEAKER:

(It is Jeanine but no one knows this.)

Ohayō.

*All freeze, realizing something is off, deer in the headlights.*

Ohayō, kaimono kyaku.

MAVIS

Wait–

GERI

Is that --

JAYCEE

Japanese?

WES

It's happening.

*(Wes now goes into "I cannot control the world/I can only control how I react to the world"... sotto voce)*

LOUDSPEAKER

Tenpo o kyūgyō shite orimasu.

MAVIS

It's probably not that bad.

JAYCEE

Ohmygod. What if they shut down the store?

GERI

They're not gonna do that.

LOUDSPEAKER

We are shutting down the store.

GERI

Let's not panic.

LOUDSPEAKER

Sugu ni kōka-teki

MAVIS

They're not gonna do it immediately.

LOUDSPEAKER

Effective immediately.

JAYCEE

I actually...

I did something.

I thought I did something.

With my life.

MAVIS

Jaycee.

LOUDSPEAKER

Hinan suru.

JAYCEE

What if they make us leave?

MAVIS

They're not gonna *make* us leave.

LOUDSPEAKER

Please leave.

JAYCEE

My life's work—

VO

Your life's work is meaningless.

*Dog sound.*

MAVIS

I thought we-- wait. (to Loudspeaker) What?

*A dog barks.*

LOUDSPEAKER

I'm sorry. That should have been in Japanese:  
Anata no jinsei o kaketa shigoto wa muimidesu. I'm still learning.

*Rat dog from earlier pulls a curtain back to reveal: Jeanine! (Duh duh duh!)*

LOUDSPEAKER/ Now JEANINE revealed

Omigod!

Oh. I thought it was a rat!

*She picks up dog.*

Awww, hello widdle ratpuppy.

*All stop and look at Jeanine.*

WES

Jeanine?

JEANINE

(to Wes) Honeybum!

GERI

Jeanine.

JEANINE

Mother, are you still here?

JAYCEE

(trying to place Jeanine) Wait.

JEANINE

Long time for you to be in one place, don't you think?

JAYCEE

Weren't you my broker?

JEANINE

I was!

WES



(to Jeanine): You broke my heart.

JAYCEE

Brokers!

JEANINE

Aw, honeybum.

JAYCEE

This is the "intransigent" ex?

JEANINE

He's obdurate, am I right?

GERI

Learning new words I see.

JEANINE

It's from the vocab-word-a-day calendar you sent at Christmas, Mummy.

MAVIS

JEANINE?! (to Wes and Geri) This is *your* Jeanine?

JEANINE

Oh. Um... Avis?

MAVIS

*Mavis.*

JAYCEE

(re: Mavis and Jeanine) How is it possible we all know this woman?

GERI

Are you—?

WES

Are you the Rep from Kabushiki-Gaisha Rosso?

JEANINE

It's my latest gig!

WES

Of course it is.

MAVIS

This. (*indicating baby*) This is hers!

ALL BUT JEANINE

What?!

MAVIS

This is her baby. I am her surrogate! She promised me nine grand to carry this child for her then she split after only giving me a \$500 deposit.

WES

Wait – is it mine?

JEANINE

Oh, honeybum, math was never your forte.

MAVIS

You owe me eighty-five hundred dollars. AND. You have to take this. (meaning: baby)

JEANINE

The thing is? I changed my mind?

MAVIS

WHAT?!?!?

GERI

I told you she was a heartbreaker.

WES

Typical.

JEANINE

I thought I wanted a kid, but then I realized that I'd just be having one so someone would love me unconditionally.

JAYCEE

Your mother is right here, Jeanine.

JEANINE

Mummy has conditions.

JAYCEE

Brokers.

GERI

I love you, Jeanine. I just think you are running away from yourself.

JEANINE

Which is exactly why I changed my mind about having a baby. See how I've grown, Mom? Could you imagine how much harder it'd be to travel with a kid?

MAVIS

It's a little late to change your mind!

JEANINE

Which is why we didn't sign anything.

GERI

Mavis, you didn't sign any paperwork?

JAYCEE

Brokers.

WES

I always wanted a child.

JAYCEE

*(to Jeanine) YOU! YOU ARE A BAD WOMAN!*

*(From this moment to the repeat of the line, Jaycee is on a tear. She bores into Jeanine.)*

MAVIS

True. Harsh. But true.

JAYCEE

Look. Look at what you've wrought. This Lovely, Caring, Dedicated and Extremely Awkward man who Reads the Company Handbook for Fun now has a codependent relationship with a meditation app—

WES

Well, I—

JAYCEE (cont.)

And this, this Multi-Skilled Maven of Muffins who has Succeeded at Everything lives in Constant Regret that she failed at the one thing that was Most Important.

GERI

I, uh —

JAYCEE (cont.)

And this, this, Bizarrely Opinionated Wondrous Walking Miracle with an Affinity for Pyrotechnics —who up until this moment I thought was a Young Unwed Mother with a Questionable Moral Compass—

MAVIS

Judgement!

JAYCEE

Doesn't realize that she is the most Creative Invested Funny Capable Person I've Ever Met and any kid would be lucky to have her as a Mom.

MAVIS

You really think that??—

JAYCEE

YOU are the reason we are all here Playing House inside a store instead of Living in the Real World like Normal Capable Low-Level Functioning Adults on a Daily Dose of Caffeine, Ambien and Zoloft.

**YOU ARE A VERY BAD WOMAN!**

*A moment.*

JEANINE

Oh, Macy.

ALL but JEANNINE

JAYCEE!

JEANINE

I'm not a very bad woman. I'm just a very bad  
(a discovery)...*adult*.

*The Tidoptimist timepiece dings.*  
*(she sees the time)*

Oh. Speaking of adulting.

*(She takes out papers and a pen.)*

JAYCEE  
Great.

GERI

Well, kids, we had a good run.

MAVIS

Where am I going to raise this baby when the store closes down?

JEANINE

Omygod! The store is closing down? Where did you hear that?

WES

Right here. Five minutes ago!

JEANINE

Who told you??

ALL

YOU!

JEANINE

ME? No. I'm not here to close the store down.

JAYCEE

Then what was all that Japanese on the loudspeaker?!?!?!?

JEANINE

(confused) On the loudsp- (realizing) OH! OH YOU COULD HEAR THAT?

ALL

YES!

JEANINE

OH! Yeah, now I see why you're all miserable!!! I was just practicing. (*She pulls out a Japanese to English translation book.*) I was just practicing from my translation book.

WES

So—

JAYCEE

So you aren't here to close the store?!

JEANINE

Oh. Oh Yeah. No. NO. I see.

Yeah, I can't do that.

Don't you know about Kaizen? The Japanese Management Style for self-improvement? Or the Swedish management style founded in the premise that all work has value and that management goes from the bottom up?

Wes knows. He's read the company handbook.

I couldn't do that. Even if I wanted to.

GERI

Then why are you here Jeanine?

JEANINE

OH! Oh right!

I have to get the name of the Duktig baby.

WES

Oh, I have to uh, go through all the submissions.

JAYCEE

It's Mavis.

MAVIS

What? No, I'm disqualified.

JAYCEE

Jeanine, are you an employee of Duktig?

JEANNINE



No. I'm an independent contractor! Cool, right, Mom? It's like – I get to do work that let's me boop boop boop (bounce around).

WES

So if Jeanine is not an employee of Duktig

And if the baby is biologically....

MAVIS

(getting invested) Not mine. I told you.

GERI

I thought you were being existential.

MAVIS

No, I was being literal. As in: this baby is literally not mine.

JAYCEE

So, if it's not yours (to Wes) and (to Mavis) it's not yours and (to Jeanine) you don't technically work here, that means -

WES

(realizing) - this baby is the first pregnancy proven positive by the ad.

GERI

That means -

JAYCEE

Duktig has promised a home to this baby for life!

WES

Varje moln har en silverkant.

JEANINE

"Every cloud has a silver lining." Cute. OK. And the name?

*All turn to Mavis.*

MAVIS

Um. Gemenskap. We'll call him or her Gemmy.

JEANINE

Cool.

OK. I gotta run. (about dog)

I'm gonna take this guy. Look! He fits in my purse!

GERI

Jeanine, you have to feed it you know.

If you continue this way, you'll end up just like me.

JEANINE

(cocks head) You keep saying that like it's a bad thing.

*A second.*

Aishitemasu, Mummy!

*Jeanine exits.*

GERI

(moved) I love you too, baby.

MAVIS

Is this. Is this really the Duktig baby?

JAYCEE

OMYGOSH. Don't you see????! It is! It is the Duktig baby! Then the Duktig toddler, then the Duktig teenager.

GERI

I think you skipped a few years there, Jaycee.

JAYCEE

Then the Duktig college grad, and law school grad, or vocational school grad or whatever it wants to be....This kid will get the violin lessons we hold in the dining room section and join the soccer team we started in lawn and garden. It will learn design in the office section and Swedish and Japanese in our living room language labs. It will have round the clock daycare from our Standardized Livers.

GERI

And the extended family meals!

WES

The popcorn movie nights!

JAYCEE

This will be the first child of a new generation.

GERI

(re: raising a new baby) Second time's the charm!

MAVIS

I don't know if I'm –

JAYCEE

A caterpillar never knows it's about to become a butterfly.

MAVIS

Who said that?

JAYCEE

I did. Just now.

MAVIS

Just to be clear: I'm the butterfly in this situation, correct?

JAYCEE

Wes?

WES

Well they say it takes a village, don't they?

*Links arms.*

GERI

It does. It does take a village.

*Links arms.*

JAYCEE

No, Wes, Geri.

Mavis, it doesn't take a village.

*Links arms.*

*A moment.*

It takes a store.

*By the end they are all linking arms a la Wizard of Oz.*

*Lights.*

*End of play.*

## Swedish Translations

Fingertoppskänsla - a person highly skilled at something, who can make decisions according to the feeling in their fingertips

Knullrufs - bed hair

Lagom - the middle way, everything in moderation

Sambovikt - that 'comfort' weight you gain when you're in a solid, stable relationship

Tretår - A second refill or "threefill" of coffee

Kulturbärare - Lit. culture-bearer or culture-carrier; a phenomenon (e.g., person or idea) that upholds a culture and/or moves it forward.

Surströmmingspremier - The first day of the year where it acceptable to eat rotten herring.

Orka - energy

Duktig - being good at something and being hard-working.

Snygging - hottie

Sagolikt - fairytale

angestdämpande - anxiety reducing

Barnasinne - a childlike state of mind

Tidoptimist - time optimist

språkkänsla - feeling for language

Beslutsångest - decision anxiety

Kärleksförklaring- a declaration of love

Attitydinkontinens - attitude incontinence